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REPORT FROM BRITAIN
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November 5, 1949
Aberdeen, Scotland

Last night I attended at the cost of a sixpence an open meeting of the Scottish-U.S.S.R. Society, called to commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the Russian Revolution. More than 500 Aberdonians were present at the publicly owned Music Hall to hear Professor I. L. Gluschenko of the Institute of Genetics of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R., and Pavlo Tychina, Ukrainian poet.

Gluschenko and Gychina spoke in Russian, had their words translated sentence by sentence to an attentive and at times wildly demonstrative audience. The substance of their remarks was that Russia suffered immeasurably during the war and now wants peace above everything else. Stalin's leadership was glorified and there were occasional remarks concerning British and American war-mongers. On the whole the Russians were dignified and moderate. They were apparently overwhelmed by their friendly reception.

An Irishwoman, an Australian, and a Scotsman named Murray indulged in a lot of rabble-rousing talk which reached its evangelistic climax in a fervent appeal for funds to carry on the good work of closer cultural relations between holy Russia and the rest of the world. Coins and bills were tossed onto the stage to the tune of something over a hundred dollars.

Comrade Murray would have given any old-time Southern demagogue a run for his money. His sublime enthusiasm carried him to the declaration that the Russian standard of living was twice that of the British and that British and American workers would never fight in a capitalistic war against Russia. With considerable emotion he read a telegram from one of the recently-convicted and martyred communists now lodged in a New York jail. Statistics demonstrating the great physical progress made by Russia were thrown around with great abandon. It was made clear, too, that under the benign leadership of their beloved Joe Stalin, the Russians were unafraid of anyone.

There was no way for me to tell whether the audience had succumbed to the charms of communism or whether its outbursts of affection for the visitors were simply a demonstration of a people pathetically eager to grasp at any straw which might mean peace in a distracted world. There was no question period but I had the distinct feeling that it would not have been a propitious

time to have been critical of such a love feast.

I am inclined to believe that such a meeting might have led to violence in the American South. Here the Russians were received at lunch by the Lord Provost of Aberdeen and were accorded a reception by the Trades and Labor Council.

The average Briton is a stubborn soul. He staunchly believes in what to him are eternal verities. The same qualities which made it incomprehensible for him to think of defeat in Britain's "finest hour" lead him to believe that it is far better to accord minority groups the privilege of speaking their piece in public than to drive them underground. To him a communistic Britain is unthinkable. Freedom of speech is an integral part of his precious heritage of liberty and includes the right of extreme opposition to things as they are. Only time will tell whether the British course of listening to and perhaps ignoring the prophets of communism in action is superior to the American way of throwing the heretics into prison.
